

forward was the labor movement. Organized labor went into plants and factories and offices across America and said: Workers, if you stand together, if you bargain together, great things can happen.

They did. We created health insurance as we know it today, pension plans that have provided the kind of security people dream of in retirement, good-paying jobs in safe workplaces. The American dream was realized. People bought the second car, put the kids through college, had enough time for a vacation, and enjoyed the good life in America.

It is no coincidence that as the strength of America's labor movement has declined. So, too, have the wages of working families. Not that those working families aren't doing a good job; they are. They are producing more goods and services than ever. They are more productive than ever, but they are not being paid for their hard work. They are not receiving a decent, livable wage so they can work one job and still have time with their family. They are not receiving the kind of health insurance protection they once received and fewer and fewer are receiving.

Taking a look at the numbers, in Illinois the median hourly wage fell in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 by 4.4 percent. Think about that. The median wage of people getting up and going to work every day is not keeping up with inflation; it is falling behind. Health care benefits in Illinois, the share of the population under the age of 65 with employer-provided health insurance fell from 71.9 percent in 1999 to 68.2 percent in 2004. Fewer people had health insurance through their employers over a 5-year period. That is the wrong direction. Pensions are the same. In my State, 52.6 percent of the people had employer-provided pensions in the years 1998 to 2000. By 2003 to 2005, the share had dropped to under 50 percent.

I honestly believe if workers can organize, if they can bargain, we could have profitable corporations with quality goods and services, good employee morale, and employees treated decently. That can happen.

The Employer Free Choice Act says that we want to give employees who want to organize a fighting chance. Some will say during the debate: If a majority of the workers in the workplace sign a card and say, I want to be part of a union, the process moves forward. Currently, if 30 percent of the workers sign a card, they move toward an election. Do you know how long it takes to have this election? Do you know how long it takes for the employees to finally get their chance to vote today as to whether they want a union? The Chicago Tribune pointed out in March of this year that the average National Labor Relations Board disputed election—and so many of them are disputed—takes 802 days to resolve, more than 2 years. Just think for a moment: if we said that the interminable campaigns we now have for public of-

fice would double in length—instead of a year from announcing your candidacy to a vote, we will make it over 2 years—is it possible voters would lose interest in that period of time? Is it possible people could work on their minds about prejudices against a candidate or for a candidate during that time? Of course it is. We need to make this a reasonable period and a reasonable process that comes to the ultimate question: Do a majority of the workers at this location want to organize collectively to try to represent their best interests and the interests of their family? I believe that is only fair.

Tuesday morning, we will have a vote. I hope my colleagues on both sides will take a close look at the legislation. If we give more opportunities for workers to express their heartfelt intentions about creating a union and they do, what is going to happen in America is as positive as what happened after World War II. We are going to see more workers in safer workplaces with decent living wages, good health insurance, and good pension benefits, and the corporations will still make a profit. Instead of giving some CEO \$600 million for very little performance, they may have to make do with \$300 million. I know it is going to be tough, but I think they can get by and then take that \$300 million and give it to the workers so they have a chance to enjoy a good life without indebtedness and without the worries that come with the current situation.

I hope my colleagues will join me on Tuesday in supporting this effort. I hope in joining me, we will see a change in the law and, with this change, we will see a dramatic improvement in the economic fate of American families.

#### PROTECTION OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this morning's Washington Post had a front-page story that troubles me. It is about Vice President CHENEY and his attempts to exempt the Office of the Vice President of the United States of America from the Presidential Executive order that establishes a uniform, government-wide system for safeguarding classified national security information. The decision by Vice President CHENEY to exempt his office from this system for protecting classified information troubles me. It could place national security secrets at risk.

It is hard to believe the Vice President is taking this action given the history of security breaches involving high-ranking officials in his office. Scooter Libby, the Vice President's former Chief of Staff, has been convicted of several felonies: perjury, obstruction of justice, and false statements. He has been sentenced to prison in part for his role in disclosing the identity of a covert CIA agent and then misrepresenting that fact to a grand jury. Worse, it appears, at least accord-

ing to these press reports, Vice President CHENEY has attempted to block inspection of Federal agencies and White House offices to ensure compliance with the security procedures required by the President.

According to the National Archives, the agency responsible for conducting the oversight, Vice President CHENEY asserted that his office is not "an entity within the executive branch" and, therefore, not subject to Presidential Executive orders. The Vice President is arguing that his office is not in the executive branch of Government? It is hard to imagine the tortured logic Vice President CHENEY is using to avoid the requirements of the law and Executive orders.

Then he recommended that the Executive order be amended to abolish the Information Security Oversight Office. Here is a Vice President who has already been challenged as to the groups he meets with and the people he consults with in making some of the most important decisions for the country's policy. Here is a Vice President who has sadly misrepresented this war in Iraq over and over again, from the initiation of the war, the existence of weapons of mass destruction, and now is saying that he is not covered by the law when it comes to the disclosure of classified information within his own office. This is evidence of arrogance of power, and it is unacceptable.

The Vice President of the United States and his former Chief of Staff are not above the law. They have to be held to the same high standard of performance as Members of Congress and every member of our Government. For the Vice President to believe he has no responsibility to meet this requirement of the law is, in my mind, a dereliction of duty and responsibility to the people of the United States. And then for him to attempt to abolish the agency that was putting pressure on him to follow the law shows he has gone entirely too far.

Vice President CHENEY is not above the law. He is required to follow the law, as every American citizen should. This situation and the prosecution of his former Chief of Staff are evidence of an attitude toward governmental responsibility which has to change. I sincerely hope the Vice President will make it clear in the week ahead that he is finally going to comply with these Executive orders, that he is going to make sure we protect classified information moving through his office so we do not compromise this important intelligence data that keeps America safe.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.